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Literary Review on Nourishment of Manovaha Strotas

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Abstract:

The prevalence of mental disorders is staggering, with 13.9% of adult Indians, suffering from a mental disorder in any given year. Psychiatric epidemiology has been an area of great interest among all the leading psychiatrists. From an Ayurvedic viewpoint, this vast morbidity reflects two things. Firstly: culture-wide deficiencies in diet and lifestyle are leading to impaired *Agni*, the root of either physical and mental health or disease, "Life-span, complexion, strength, health, enthusiasm, corpulence, luster, immunity, energy, etc". All these depend on *Agni*." Secondly, we inhabit a culture whose *Rajasic* and *Tamasic* nature is deleterious to our mental health. One of the unique features of Ayurveda is its emphasis on mental health through *sattva*. Right diet, right relationship, rituals, chanting and meditation form a comprehensive plan for preventative mental health.

Keywords:

Agni, Rajasic, Tamasic, Sattva.

Introduction:

Ayurveda aims at preservation and promotion of health, and prevention and cure of diseases through the concept of positive physical and mental health. While describing healthy individual acharya Sushruta has mentioned that “when the three doshas (*vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*), *Agni* (digestive fire), all *Dhatus* (body tissue components), All *malla* (all the excretory functions) are in perfect order with a pleasantly disposed and contented mind, senses and spirit [1]. Which is further accepted by WHO i. e Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of any disease or infirmity [2]. The society is very much aware about physical health but one should have to focus on mental health as well, because if the mind is in calm and healthy state it will keep the body to its balanced state.

Aims and Objectives:

The aim of the study is to focus on nourishment of *Manovaha Strotas* by mean to avoid the things which will precipitate *Rajasa and Tamasa doshas*. The main objective of the study is to maintain healthy status of *manovaha Strotas* by following *sattvic* life style.

Our ancestors have been emphasizing for centuries that the food we consume influences our personalities. Western Science is just now trying to understand the truth behind it. What is the rationale behind the Indian emphasis that the type of food that we consume influences behavior, and consequently the personality traits? While genetic and evolutionary factors are outside our control, the type of food we consume is

more or less under our direct control, paving way to improving our attitudes, behavior and personality.

Material and method and Observation:

Manah Swaroopa: (Concept of mind):

According to *Acharya charaka*, ‘that entity which is responsible for thinking is known as *manas*’. It is said to have been inherited from the previous birth and evolved from the combination of *vaikarika* and *tejasa ahankara*. It is *achetana* (inactive) by itself but gets *chetana* (activeness) from *atma* (soul) [3]. It is called a *dravya* (substance). Although beyond sensory perceptions, it is called so since it has got both action and quality, coexistent within itself. It is connected to both *jnyanendriya* (sensory centres) and *karmendriya* (motor centres). That is why it is called *Ubhayatmaka* (combined psychomotor entity) [4].

Role of Manah in the digestion of food:

Describing the role of *manas* in the digestion of food consumed, *Acharya Charaka* advises that food should be consumed with rapt attention. Defying this is liable to allow the food goes wrong way or injure the health or the food is not properly placed in the stomach and there is no appreciation of either the good or bad qualities of food taken [5]. Further, indicating the need of mental poise for drug action, no one who has not rid oneself of the evils of both mind and body beginning with the gross ones can ever expect to reap the benefits resulting from vitalization therapy.

Vayu which is one of the *tridoshas* (the three bioentities viz., *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* which are generally more related to *shareera*) is said to be the controller and

prompter of *manas*. It is also said that the excited *vayu* depresses mind, gives rise to fear, grief, stupefaction, feeling of helplessness, delirium etc [6].

Our consumer culture of getting and spending is inherently *rajasic* in nature and keeps us incessantly outer-focused as we seek meaning in the biggest, the best, the latest, newest. Sedentary lifestyles, junk food, recreational drugs, alcohol consumption and the mind-numbing use of television and mobile phones foster *tamas* in the mind. Under the constant irritation created by *rajas* and the heavy dullness of *tamas*, inherent tendencies to mental disorders have fertile ground to flourish. *Manovaha srotas* is nourished by *sattva*. This begins with implementing a *sattvic* diet.

“Foods that augment lifespan (*ayu*), purity, strength, health, happiness and cheerfulness, which are tasty and sufficiently oily (*snigdha*), substantial and agreeable are favored by the *sattvic* person.”[7]

The Qualities of Sattva:

Person who predominantly have the qualities of this *Guna*, are called *Sattvic* personalities. These individuals are usually calm and composed. They are comfortable with themselves. They are self-absorbed and self-satisfied as in contemplation. They do not derive pleasure from harming others, nor do they enjoy at the expense of others sufferings. They are altruistic and forgiving in nature; they try to help those in need. They put others before self and are truthful and honest. They do not generally succumb to the temptations of greed or lust. By and large they exhibit saintly qualities.[8]

While *Ayurvedic* health regimens mentioned in the ancient texts often include non-vegetarian foods, the pursuit of *satva* leads us to the yogic vegetarian diet outlined in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Gerhandha Samhita*. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, legumes and dairy products are the basic food groups comprising the *sattvic* diet, although fruits and dairy products are considered the most *sattvic* of all foods.

“Bitter, sour and salty tastes, unripe vegetables, fermented/rotting and oily foods, intoxicating liquors, fish, meat, yoghurt, chick peas, oil-cake, asafetida (*hing*), garlic, onion, etc., should not be eaten. Wheat, rice, barley, corn, milk, ghee, natural sugar, butter, honey, dried ginger, snake gourd, the five vegetables, *mung* beans, pure water; these are very beneficial to those who practice Yoga.”[9]

The *sattvic* diet requires the basic components of *sattva*—purity and *ahimsa* (non-violence). In terms of purity, food additives and preservatives, hormones and pesticides should be avoided in a *sattvic* diet. Many additives are inherently irritating to the brain and create *rajasic* states of mind. The quest for a non-violent way of eating leads to a vegetarian diet but also calls in question dairy products in light of modern methods of dairy farming. Some resolve this dilemma by adopting a vegan diet, others by being careful about the source of the dairy products they consume. Seeking *ahimsa* in diet also leads us to consider the environmental cost of our food and the welfare of farm workers and the earth. From this standpoint, local, organic foods would be inherently more *sattvic*.

Additional levels of *sattva* and enhanced *prana* can be added to our food by cultivating it using Vedic farming techniques, known nowadays as homotherapy farming.[10,11] our food can be further imbued with *sattva* by offering the first portion to a picture of a spiritual teacher or form of God.

यत्करोषियदश्रासियज्जुहोषिददासियत्।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम्
||Ba.gaI9/27||

“Whatever you do, whatever you eat ... do it as an offering to me.”[12]

And when all else fails, pray before you eat and consume the food with a *sattvic mind*.

The *sattvic* diet is supplemented by use of special *sattvic* herbs, chief of which are *tulsi* and *brahmi*. There can be consumed as teas to enhance *sattva* and help prevent as well as treat mental illnesses.[13]

Our relationships are the next place to seek to replace *rajas* and *tamas* with *sattva*. The speech of *ahimsa*, on the other hand, is soft and gentle. *Sattvic* relationships and a *sattvic* peaceful home are fostered by respectful, gentle and honest speech, avoiding judgment and insults. Remaining in right relationship means following the four steps of reconciliation whenever conflict occurs:

1. Recognition: Recognizing and understanding how our action hurt the other person.
2. Repentance: Making an emotional connection with the pain caused.
3. Reparation: A concrete act or gift offered in restitution (Native

Americans used to give horses to repair relationships).

4. Rehabilitation: Steps we take to ensure the action will not recur.

After changing our physical diet, we also need to change our mental diet. Spiritual reading, *kirtan*, Sanskrit chanting, getting together with friends to discuss topics in *Ayurveda* and yoga philosophy help create a calm state of mind. Performing Vedic ceremonies such as *agnihotra*—a brief sunrise and sunset fire ceremony—have been shown to help addictions and develop a positive state of mind.[14]

“*Agnihotra* is a Vedic ritual of lighting fire in a copper pyramid pot with use of Mantras at sunrise and sunset time. It is found to have *neurophysiological* effect on human body and brain. Clinically it produces mental tranquility and reported to have useful adjunct effect on de-addiction.”[15]

Mantras and Sanskrit chanting also help direct the mind into *sattva*. Preeminent among these is *Gayatri mantra*, the mantra of light. “The *Gayatri mantra* is considered the quintessence of wisdom. Its main focus is on clarity and enlightened perception.”[16]

The basic principle of *Ayurveda* is “*hetu viparita chikitsa*”. If *manovaha srotas* lacks its basic nutrition, our genetic tendencies to mental illness are more likely to manifest. A sense of transcendent meaning, as well as a sense of purpose in the relative world, is the essential nutrient for *manovaha srotas*. In pursuit of this transcendent meaning,

daily meditation provides a healthy meal for *manovaha srotas*. Above all, meditation in the *brahmamuhurta*, the sacred hour before sunrise, affords a time of *sattvic* tranquility, which deeply nourishes and transforms.[17]

Discussion:

Does food influence behavior? While it appears simple to draw an analogy by comparing the aggressive behavior of carnivores with the docile behavior of the herbivores in the animal kingdom, we should not forget the fact that carnivores become aggressive because they have to chase their food, while the herbivores do not suffer the need to be aggressive; they are blessed to find food all around them. But again, there is a caveat here; it is common knowledge that the meat eating communities, among humans, are generally aggressive and the strict vegetarians are sober and quiet. Unlike in the animal kingdom, the meat eaters here do not have to chase their food.

A basic menu for *manovah srotas* might include some selection from the following. And while this is a menu for adults, it is important to note that children need to nourish *manovaha srotas* as well. Encourage children to attend *agnihotra* and meditate for as many minutes as their age e.g. five minutes for a five year old.[18]

- Rise in *brahmamuhurta*
- Personal hygiene time
- *Pranayama*
- Meditation
- Sunrise *agnihotra*
- *Gayatri mantra*
- Yoga
- *Sattvic* breakfast of fruits and milk

- Daily work done with devotion and tranquility
- *Sattvic* lunch of grains, vegetables, legumes, ghee
- Walk 1,000 paces
- Daily work done with devotion and tranquility
- Walk
- Sip *Tulsi brahmi* tea
- Sunset *agnihotra*
- *Pranayama*
- Meditation or *kirtan*
- *Sattvic* dinner (fruits and milk or lunch-type menu)
- Family time (singing, playing, reading aloud, instead of television and mobile phone)
- Spiritual reading before bed

Conclusion:

In order to be free from mental disorder *Ayurveda* prescribe that one should not allow oneself to become a victim of impulses like greed, grief, fear, anger, jealousy, impudence, vanity etc [20]. One of the unique features of *Ayurveda* is its emphasis on mental health through *sattva*. Right diet, right relationship, rituals, chanting and meditation form a comprehensive plan for preventative mental health.

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